Chapter 1: A Perfect Storm:

How the Online Environment, Social Norms and Law

Shape Girls’ Lives

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[C]onstructed as commodities and markets, trained to be nurturers and caregivers, and having their wants and voices trivialized and dismissed, Canadian girls need to have their realities recognized, and require support, resources, and programs which address their specific concerns.[[2]](#footnote-3)

INTRODUCTION

It is all too easy for members of dominant social groups to assume that their way of knowing the world reflects both the way the world *is* and the way that others see and experience it. Factors like economic status, sex, race, ability, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity centre the experiences of the privileged as objective reality, while marginalizing the experiences of non-dominant groups as if they were subjective exceptions. As Grillo and Wildman put it:

[M]embers of dominant groups assume that their perceptions are the pertinent perceptions, that their problems are the problems that need to be addressed, and that in discourse they should be the speaker rather than the listener.[[3]](#footnote-4)

Despite these perceptions, the reality is that people’s understandings of the world are heavily influenced by their experiences, which are dramatically affected by intersecting aspects of situation and identity.[[4]](#footnote-5) In a jurisdiction such as Canada where those in charge of the policy agenda disproportionately represent privileged communities,[[5]](#footnote-6) there is a significant risk that policies and programmes will be developed in ways that have little to do with the realities of marginalized community members. At best, such policy may have little import for marginalized community members, and at worst it may harm them. Recognizing and addressing these gaps in knowledge is therefore critical to developing meaningful policy processes and responses for all community members.

Recognition of knowledge gaps between adults and children, between women and men, between boys and girls, and between girls and women has made its way onto the international policymaking stage over the last two decades. Policy scholarship and international law recognize that policy and programs affecting children do not adequately reflect and incorporate children’s knowledge.[[6]](#footnote-7) Children[[7]](#footnote-8) bear internationally recognized human rights that entitle them both to participate on issues that affect them (according to their level of maturity),[[8]](#footnote-9) and to have their best interests and rights protected.[[9]](#footnote-10) Adults are duty-bound to facilitate realization of children’s rights and to ensure that their best interests are protected.[[10]](#footnote-11) Scholars and those involved in community programming assert, “Children have unique bodies of knowledge about their lives, needs and concerns – together with ideas and views that derive from their direct experiences”.[[11]](#footnote-12) In the result, they ought to be considered experts in their everyday lives,[[12]](#footnote-13) as educators of adults about their lives,[[13]](#footnote-14) and must be afforded *meaningful[[14]](#footnote-15)* opportunities to participate in decisions, policy and programming that affect them. At the same time, limitations in their autonomy and life experience will often mean that their participation and decision-making requires respectful adult support.[[15]](#footnote-16)

Similarly, recognition that gender can intersect with other axes of discrimination in ways that materially impact on women’s experiences of the world has produced national and international calls for mainstreaming gender analysis at every stage of the policy process.[[16]](#footnote-17) Responses to gaps based on age and gender (and the intersections of each with other axes of discrimination) cannot, however, be presumed to address the needs of *girls*, who are marginalized by their gender among children and by their age among women.[[17]](#footnote-18) Among children, girls’ needs are likely to differ from boys’ (particularly in a sexist society),[[18]](#footnote-19) while in terms of gender, girls’ needs may well differ from those of women (particularly in a society that prioritizes adults).[[19]](#footnote-20) In light of this, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child requires states to:

pay special attention to the right of the girl child to be heard, to receive support, if needed, to voice her view and her view be given due weight, as gender stereotypes and patriarchal values undermine and place severe limitations on girls in the enjoyment of the right [of children to be heard under Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of Children].[[20]](#footnote-21)

Girls, then, must be consulted and engaged in developing policy and programming that affect them.[[21]](#footnote-22) Responding to issues that impact on children and youth in ways that are meaningful to girls will often require addressing systemic factors of sexism, racism, poverty and other intersecting axes of discrimination that can structure girls’ experiences.[[22]](#footnote-23) It is essential to understand the different impacts of policy on males and females of different backgrounds not only because generic programs are often not universally effective,[[23]](#footnote-24) but also because, as Jiwani notes:

gender-neutral descriptions obscure root causes of violence, and leave underlying gender-related dynamics unnamed and invisible. Instead, structured and systemic social problems appear as random, un-patterned, and individualized.[[24]](#footnote-25)

Meaningful inclusion of the varied realities of children, women and girls in the policy process enhances the likelihood that policy and programming will produce positive outcomes. Equally importantly, incorporating their voices in the policy process creates opportunities for women and girls to develop enhanced citizenship and participation skills that are central to democracy.[[25]](#footnote-26) It can also unearth issues and responses that might otherwise be invisible to those whose life experiences are not marked by vulnerabilities based on, among other things, gender, age, race, and their complex intersections.[[26]](#footnote-27) I suggest that fulfilling our international obligations to girls not only requires listening to them to better understand their firsthand perspectives on their everyday lives, but also addressing environmental factors that impede the exercise of their rights and their ability to flourish.

The interviews and focus groups with girls and young women reported on in this chapter derive from my concern about a particular kind of policy: Canadian federal policy developments relating to technology as it affects children (and particularly girls). Specifically, we were concerned about whether federal policy, particularly focused on criminal law amendments to address issues such as online child pornography, luring and (more recently) “cyberbullying”, was addressing issues and adopting approaches that reflected girls’ and young women’s experiences in their daily lives. In the result, we decided to ask girls and young women for their firsthand perspectives. We asked both about their experiences with online social media and about the issues and responses identified as significant by policymakers during debates in the Canadian federal parliament and related committees from 1994 forward on topics relating to children, youth, girls (where mentioned) and technology.

As reported previously,[[27]](#footnote-28) our analysis of these debates revealed a focus on online sexual predation, online child pornography, and the age of consent, typically using gender-neutral language that effectively disappeared girls from the policy agenda (even in relation to violence statistically more likely to affect girls). Paralleling policy around violence prevention and girls previously analysed by the Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence (FREDA),[[28]](#footnote-29) the debates we reviewed also centred attention on individuals. Areas of focus included unknown “sexual predators and naïve, negligent and irresponsible parents” and “extreme sexual abuse of babies and very young children that currently fall outside of the acceptable scope of the mainstream [corporate] agenda”.[[29]](#footnote-30) Largely unconsidered were underlying systemic issues such as the mainstream corporate trade in stereotypical representations of girls’ sexuality,[[30]](#footnote-31) although these issues were occasionally raised in policy submissions on “cyberbullying”.[[31]](#footnote-32) The relatively rare instances where participants in the policy process broke from gender neutrality included specific examples of girls who had committed suicide following incidents described as “cyberbullying”,[[32]](#footnote-33) and more generic comments about “girls” casting them in the “roles of criminals, naïve victims, know-it-alls in need of education and sometimes as sexual provocateurs placing men in danger of criminalization.”[[33]](#footnote-34)

Given the way policymakers defined the issues, reactions were, by and large, punitive, reactive and individuated. Others have noted that related public educational responses have also responsibilized girls targeted by online harassment as authors of their own misfortune in need of training about the dangers of unknown sexual predators.[[34]](#footnote-35) The qualitative research reported upon here was designed, in part, to better understand the relevance of the policy agenda formulated by adults from girls’ and young women’s own perspectives, based on their experiences of their everyday online/offline lives.

METHODOLOGY

In January and February of 2013, we held a series of interviews and focus groups with girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 22. All participants used interactive online media (such as social networking, blogging and/or user generated video sites) as a regular part of their social lives. Half of our sample resided in an urban Ontario setting and half resided in a rural Ontario setting.[[35]](#footnote-36)

We interviewed six girls aged 15-17 and six young women aged 18-22. An additional 22 participated in four focus group discussions, as follows: (1) seven girls aged 15-17 living in the urban setting; (2) five girls aged 15-17 living in the rural setting; (3) six young women aged 18-22 living in the urban setting and (4) four young women aged 18-22 living in the rural setting. A professional research house recruited our participants on the basis of sex, age (either 15-17 or 18-22) and location of residence (urban or rural). Participants were not specifically asked to reveal information about other aspects of their identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation.

In the interviews and the focus groups, we explored, among other things, the types of visual and textual representations the participants used online to express their identity as young women, and the benefits and pitfalls they experience on social media. We also asked for their views on the issues and policy responses focused upon by policymakers (as identified in the review of federal parliamentary debates previously reported upon and summarized above).

With participant permission, the interviews and focus group were audiotaped and transcribed by our research assistants for analysis. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts, and pseudonyms were used to identify participants.[[36]](#footnote-37)

OUR FINDINGS

In this chapter, we focus on our participants’ responses to questions about what policymakers should know about being a girl online, as well as their recommendations for what policymakers should do to address the issues of concern to them.

***What policymakers should know about being a girl online***

Some of our participants worked to distance themselves from the *other* girls who spend too much time seeking attention online or post “bad” or “inappropriate” photos of themselves.[[37]](#footnote-38) Many also, however, identified themselves as engaging or having engaged (at an earlier stage in their lives) in those kinds of online practices. Perhaps because many of them were able to see themselves in the *other* girl they sometimes described, most of our participants offered empathetic explanations that went beyond simplistically *blaming* individual girls. Instead, they contextualized these practices within a broader framing of the benefits of online interaction and self-exploration, the impacts of mediatized stereotypes of white, heteronormative female beauty, and technological architectures that simultaneously enabled and limited control over their fully integrated online/offline lives.

*It isn’t all bad*

Many of our participants stressed that policymakers should not focus solely on the negative side of online life. Most emphasized the social and entertainment aspects of keeping in touch with others online. As one would expect in a fully integrated online/offline existence, this also included maintaining intimate relationships (sometimes using certain kinds of precautions). As Andrea (age 22) put it:

I do send pictures to my boyfriend. But I always make sure my face is not in there. … Because even though I don’t think he’d spread them around, if he lost his phone and it wasn’t password protected there, that would not be good.

While also appreciating the social and relational aspects of online interaction, one of our participants emphasized its value as a tool of social and political change for women:

[O]ne in six people around the world are using Internet. So, I think this could help foster equality, principles of equality, principles of social justice, all that, I think it has the potential, …. Whereas in real life there’s … systemic reasons why [women] can’t achieve equality to men, …online, I think if we use it right, it’s possible. (Alessandra, age 21)

*Adults are sending mixed messages*

Our participants told us that while many adults had initially discouraged girls from being online because of the risks of sexual predation, girls were now actively encouraged to participate. For example, Eve (age 16) observed:

[T]hree years ago, people were saying like a lot of news channels are like Facebook is bad, yeah a lot of sexual offenders are using this … young girls, don’t use Facebook … and now they’re like please come to us and like us on Facebook and then maybe you get a chance to win…you know it’s ironic.

*Give girls a break as they navigate this complex environment*

Notwithstanding that it appeared that adults now *wanted* girls to be online, our participants felt adults had no idea how hard it was to *be* a girl online. As Beth (age 16) said, policymakers needed to understand that “it’s hard” to be a girl online because:

[N]o matter what you do, you’re doing something wrong. Like, if you don’t have social media, your friends can’t reach you. If you do have social media, creeps are everywhere. And it’s just, like, no matter if you say yes to something, you say no to something, they’re going to judge you for whatever you choose.

Similarly, Amelia (age 18) focused on the fact that communication on online social media had become the “norm” for girls, such that “you don’t talk to people in person so much anymore”. In light of this transition, she called for policymakers to:

[H]ave a bit of understanding as to … where we’re coming from cause if you’re going to change the way that we’re going to be socializing and like living day to day … we have to cope with that in some way and it’s going to change the way we’re acting and it’s going to change a lot of things so try not to be so … negative upon the ways that people use it because … it’s all changing it’s all new so we have to learn as we go.

Nicole (age 16) summarized:

I think they have to kinda give girls a break [Laughter] ‘cause it’s difficult online cause there’s so many sites that you can do and they’re so distracting and you could be cyberbullied and it can kinda drive people crazy.

Nicole’s comments about “cyberbullying” hint at a gap between our participants’ perspectives on online “dangers” and those of policymakers. While federal policymakers tended toward a focus on stranger danger, many of our participants revealed a much more complex conception of “danger” and its sources in their online lives.

*We live on a powder keg, in fear of an explosion causing permanent damage*

When our participants discussed issues of online fears or dangers, they tended to focus on the danger of making that one mistake that could expose them to permanent reputational harm and social ruin, a danger they often associated with “bad” or “inappropriate” images, which frequently revolved around sexualized self-representations. Josée (age 15) evoked powder keg imagery when she explained that although she marked most pictures she posted of herself “private”, she wouldn’t be concerned if they got out because

…[I]t’s not stuff which would be like a big fuse if it would get … public.

In this vein, a number of participants referred to the situation of Amanda Todd, the British Columbia teen who committed suicide after being blackmailed and taunted after she flashed her breasts in an online forum and someone uploaded a screenshot of the image to an online porn site.[[38]](#footnote-39) For example, Monique (age 16) lamented the unfairness of the situation:

[W]e like all know … if you’re going to send a picture of that like you know what can happen but it’s still not fair about how bad your reputation can get effected … one bad decision that she made doesn’t change who she is, like posting one slutty picture doesn’t make you a slut, it doesn’t change who you are, like it’s not fair how easily like your whole entire image can get changed on one image like one picture.

Others evoked powder keg imagery through different examples. For example, Keira (age 21) posited:

It makes you worry about to which extent they can use information. …[What if someone] had no clue at 17 years old that they wanted to be Prime Minister one day. And let’s say in one picture they’re smoking a joint, and there’s a photo of them on Facebook, and it ruins them.

Becky (age 19) noted, “If you understand the Internet, you know you can’t go back. It’s always there … absolutely everything is out there”. Alessandra (age 21) opined, “Everything you put up there can be traced back to you forever”. The potentially permanent outcomes of each and every posting decision led Laura (age 18) to emphasize that by the age of 12 girls should be told:

[T]here’s danger outside there, in the social media. That it’s really dangerous, and, like, if you post something it’s never going to be deleted, so think twice about what you’re going to post or what picture you’re going to take, or which video you’re going to do. … in the short term, it can make you feel good for, like two or three days. But if you look at it in five, six years when you’re trying to get a job and your boss is going to look up … you’re going to get in trouble.

Many of our participants felt that girls’ reputations were particularly vulnerable to attack, creating a gendered risk of developing a permanent negative record. They offered various reasons for and explanations of that vulnerability, many of which related to exposure to “cyberbullying”.

*“Cyberbullying” is rooted in homophobia and (possibly) sexism*

There was strong agreement among our participants that “cyberbullying” is often based in homophobia. Josie (age 16) recounted the following:

Like, my friend X is bi*[sexual]*, so he does get a lot of comments, like, “Oh, you’re so gross,” or- it’s just really annoying. ‘Cause that kind of stuff annoys me. He’ll get ragged on because he’s bi. So that stuff bothers me, too.

However, Jill (age 20) felt that, in relation to “cyberbullying” among girls, “it’s not sexist or homophobic” because she believed girls were more accepting of the LGBTQ community than were boys. Eve (age 16) emphasized that other kinds of factors, such as racism, were also often at play in “cyberbullying”.

Only a handful of participants (Brianne (age 20), Lynda (age 17), Alessandra (age 21) and Andrea (age 22)) felt that “cyberbullying” was often informed not only by homophobia, but also by sexism. As Brianne (age 20) put it,

[B]ullying is mostly based on, like, weight and what you look like, and obviously your sexual orientation. So yeah, bullying is based on that. And it’s probably our society.

According to Beth (age 16),

[H]omophobic is a big thing, but also, like, some people refuse to post, like, topless pictures, and they’ll get hate for that. Or if you do post topless pictures, you’ll get hate for that. Or if- pretty much anything you do is something wrong in someone’s eyes.

Andrea (age 22) recalled the following online posting linking sexism and homophobia:

I read something on Facebook; it was a picture and it was just black and it said, “Homophobia: the fear that gay men will treat you the same way you treat straight women.” *[laughter]* It seems so true.

A few of our participants identified specific examples of “cyberbullying” they considered to be sexist. Alessandra (age 21) noted:

[L]et’s take for example victim blaming Amanda Todd, … let’s look at the core issue here misogyny, sexism, exploitation and abuse of young girls, no no no! People are too busy victim blaming Amanda Todd [mimics in high-pitch voice] “Well, she shouldn’t have sent those pictures, what was she thinking, like, this girl’s a slut!” and it reinforces that, and so, those ideologies contribute to rape victims being –“Well, what were you doing walking alone at 12 o’clock anyways?”

Lynda (age 17) recalled a less notorious incident as one she understood to exemplify sexism:

[I]t all started off with a small comment and it could escalate to everybody getting involved [such as] calling out [a girl for] trying to get in between [another girl and her boyfriend but the “cyberbullying” was] only towards the girl and no one assumes that the guy has anything to do with it … no one said anything to him, just her.

Likewise, Alessandra (age 21) now understood what she called “beefs” between girls over boyfriends during her high school years through the lens of learned sexism:

99.0% of the time, the starting of the beef had to do with cheating, you know what I mean, boyfriends cheating or not being faithful or being attracted to other girls …

…the media has taught us to be in competition with one another and that’s why there’s not a lot of women’s solidarity, they’re quick to fight with another girl in defense of a guy, well that guy’s the cheater, that guy’s the guy that should be eliminated from the circle so that’s why guys are at a privilege in high school.

While some of our participants did not necessarily think that sexism informed “cyberbullying” many perceived clear gendered differences in the frequency and nature of “cyberbullying”.

*Girls are targeted more often and in different ways than boys*

A number of our participants felt that girls were more likely than boys to be targets of “cyberbullying” (Nicole (age 16), Clare (age 16), Amelia (age 18)). As Nicole (age 16) put it, “Girls are still considered the weaker gender, they get bullied more”. Clare (age 16) and Amelia (age 18) speculated that girls were attacked more because they participated and disclosed more online than boys. Clare noted that girls sometimes blog something intending it for strangers, but:

[I]f somebody from school found it then they’d laugh about it or share it around and everyone would laugh about it [or if a girl posted a picture that wasn’t] necessary they’ll call them out on it.

Interestingly, Clare also felt boys might get attacked for posting photos of themselves because doing so “looks gay”, on the basis of her view that posting pictures of yourself is “seen as more of a female thing”.

A number of our participants felt that girls were targeted for “cyberbullying” for reasons quite different than those for which boys were targeted. As Brianne (age 20) put it:

I think girls, it’s more that they pick on, like, weight and, like, looks and stuff. Guys, it’s more, like, well, “You haven’t tapped that many girls yet,” kind of thing. Like, “You’re not a man,” or “You haven’t been with, like, 20 girls yet, so you’re not a man.” And girls, it’s like, “Oh, well she’s slept with, like, 20 guys, so, you know, like, she’s dirty,” and stuff like that. So it’s different.

Nicole (age 16) and Amelia (age 18) both felt that girls were more likely to be targeted about their looks than were boys. As Nicole put it, “taking a blow at someone’s appearance, weight, size, height, those are all things that offend girls a lot more than guys I think”. She connected this to unrealistic media images of girls:

[Y]ou gotta learn to accept yourself before others will. … [W]ith all the magazines out the right appearance is size 2. … But realistically that’s not going to happen for everyone.

Amelia also felt that boys were likely to “cyberbully” girls by trying to “pressure you into … send[ing] them a picture or you know like pressure you into doing something”. Recalling a female Facebook friend having posted a status line saying,

“[Y]ou know you’re a real man when you tell me that if I don’t send you a picture of myself like naked that you’re going to post a picture of someone’s breasts and put them on Facebook and tag me and say that they’re mine”,

Amelia noted that girls often confront a dilemma, i.e.:

‘[C]ause what would he do with that actual picture of you if you sent it and if you don’t he’s going to try and target you anyways to the public eye and make you look trashy.

And yet, Amelia felt that the consequences of complying with a request for a naked photo were much more negative for girls than they would be for boys, which she felt wasn’t “really fair”:

I don’t think it would bother [guys] at all cause guys you know they have they can have the mindset where you know like, oh yeah, well, I’m getting lucky and you’re not and I think guys are different in that sense than girls.

Given her view that girls were more likely than boys to suffer negative targeting for engaging in (or being alleged to have engaged in) sex, Amelia felt that one of the most effective ways to attack a girl was by:

[P]osting something saying you know they slept with somebody or hooked up with somebody … and you know accusing them of being trashy or slutty. …if you posted something like that that would obviously be more damaging I think to a girl’s image.

Interestingly, however, Amelia felt it was “hard to say” if sexism informed “cyberbullying”, noting with respect to online equality, “For me at least I don’t really view [it as] any different where like guys are more than girls or girls are more than guys type thing online”.

*A perfect storm*

A number of our participants felt that girls were more exposed to “cyberbullying” (and to online sexual predation) than boys because girls posted more, sought more attention and therefore opened themselves up to a greater risk of judgment. However, when asked to explain their thinking on why that might be, our participants contextualized girls’ choices within a complex set of interactions involving personal choice, social norms, gendered marketing practices and technical architectures – that might be described as “a perfect storm”.

*Architectures that incent disclosure*

Catlin (age 19) indicated that (at least in high school), success tended to be measured by one’s friend and follower counts, suggesting that the *way* that social media sites are designed can create incentives to expand networks to include unknown people. As Monica (age 16) put it:

Yeah, lots of people would just accept people and just so they have another friend. …

Like the more friends you have, the more popular, kind of thing.

*Social norms that invited stereotypical performances of femininity & sexuality*

For many of our participants, visibility was understood to be a critical component of success online. However, some highlighted gendered, heteronormative norms around how to achieve visibility. Lynda (age 17) wanted policymakers to understand the “pressure that’s put on girls” to be like the images they see in magazines and on television:

You feel like you need to be perfect, or live up to everyone’s expectations of you. And the media’s expectations of what girls are supposed to be like.

In her view, the internet worsened the situation “[b]ecause you see other girls’ profiles and they’re like portrayed as like super pretty and all that, and you try to be like that. I guess, girls feel pressured to be like that”.

Alicia (age 17) indicated that emulating these stereotypes allows girls to compete for attention and amass followers, which can simultaneously create senses of both empowerment and vulnerability. As Clare (age 16) put it:

[G]irls are, they kind of feel pressured to be on like a lot of social media sites and posting pictures of themselves and then if they’re getting a lot of guy followers they’ll feel pressures to like cater their pictures or the style of their picture more towards the guy followers, ‘cause they’re getting a lot of them, and that they don’t necessarily post the pictures because … they don’t want to be respected by people but they want attention I guess. And they want like they want to gain a following so they feel more powerful, so that’s why they do it.

Some participants, such as Alessandra (age 21) and Cindy (age 20), felt that the competition set up between heterosexual girls for male attention increased girls’ exposure to predators. Others also felt that the publicness of online social media tended to “make more drama”, which “makes [it] more difficult for everyone”.

*Technical architectures can facilitate conflict*

A number of our participants felt that certain kinds of online platforms created conditions ripe for conflict and harassment. Our rural minor focus group participants agreed that the social media site Ask.fm[[39]](#footnote-40) was particularly problematic. As Paula (age 17) put it:

It’s so bad. It’s just, people asking people these questions, but a lot of them are negative.

Beth (age 16) agreed, noting, “Like, Ask.fm, I’ve had friends that, like, people said, “Go kill yourself; you’re no good in the world,” – things like that”. Similarly, interviewee Nicole (age 16) called Ask.fm “a big one” for cyberbullying, saying “it’s like asking people, “Come bully me please””.

However, Josie (age 16) also suggested that Ask.fm users could opt not to publish negative comments. This suggests that users aren’t aware of that option or, as Monica (age 16) suggested it might reflect a “trend” toward garnering attention, even if it is negative attention:

Monica (age \*\*\*): I don’t know if you’ve heard of the Amanda Todd thing, but her thing spread around the Internet like crazy, and she ended her life because of it and she was only like 14, 15 years old. … it’s turning that kind of stuff into a trend which is the worst thing that could happen right?

Researcher: What do you mean by turning into a trend? Do you mean it’s a trend on Twitter?

Monica (age \*\*\*): No, no, like people are doing it almost for attention, like, it’s the worst attention you could get, but almost turning into that.

Simple default settings can also add to online “drama”. For example, Catlin (age 19) noted that certain platforms automatically disclose to the sender of a message whether the recipient has read it, creating tension where the recipient doesn’t respond immediately.

*Technical architectures can complicate self-help privacy strategies*

Keira (age 21) and Andrea (age 22) – both participants in our urban adult focus group – felt that platform architecture and complex user agreements complicated the use of self-help strategies. For example, they felt that some platforms were structured to create a sense that disclosure of a considerable amount of information is necessary, when it actually isn’t. Keira indicated that this could lead to a feeling of uncomfortable “exposure” especially to unknown “friends”. For that reason, some participants preferred platforms that made it easier to post only what you want to, with interviewee Clare (age 16) noting:

I think Instagram you really don’t have to give any information about yourself it’s all shown in the pictures pretty much, it depends what you wanna show them, and then on like, I know on Facebook you have to include a lot of information, your school, hometown, everything, so that’s a lot more personal. And on like Tumblr it’s basically completely anonymous, you can leave anonymous messages so like they don’t know like anything about you so you need no information for something like that.

More than one participant said they didn’t know how online service providers used their data. Some weren’t certain how privacy settings worked either. For example, Monica (age 16) said:

I think I do [use the privacy settings]. I’m not 100% sure but I think I have, it’s like only my friends can see my stuff, I think that’s the setting that way.

Others, including Nicole (age 16), noted that privacy-setting defaults on some platforms were regularly switching, making it more difficult to maintain a consistent level of privacy. Inconsistencies between platforms with respect to privacy also created confusion. As Nicole described it, whereas a fight on Facebook would be accessible only to friends of friends,

[On Twitter] you’re fighting in front of literally everyone … if you don’t have your password protected.

Andrea (age 22) noted a bait and switch scheme under which she was lured with a free app, only to find out later that in order to keep it, she had to disclose personal information:

Yeah, ‘cause you can, like, add an app or something- like, the 8Tracks you said, and sometimes it does it at first, or a month down the road it will ask if it can access your friends or your information, and you don’t really know what it wants to really access now. And you press cancel and you can’t use it, and you’re like, “Fuck.” So I have to accept it.

Trish (age 18) also noted that using some platforms can lead to enormous growth in your number of followers just by adding a single person:

So you don’t even know who you’re talking to. …that’s kind of creepy.

Catlin (age 19) expressed concern about the mandated tie between her phone plan and having to open a Google account because:

[E]very time I take a picture on my phone, it automatically uploads to my Google account. Automatically. It doesn’t matter how many times I try to delete it, because I can’t even delete it off my phone. … ‘Cause when you first get an Android, you have to get a Google account. So now everything gets uploaded to my Google account.

Similarly, some participants, such as Kathleen (age 20), expressed concern about the ways in which platforms automatically integrated postings from other platforms, “so that everyone knows what you’re up to”.

***In the face of this perfect storm, what should policymakers do?***

While our participants did not dismiss the use of criminal and other individual sanctions to address certain kinds of online behaviours (such as non-consensual distribution of intimate images), a number of their suggestions emphasized policy approaches that broadened the policymaking lens beyond reactions to individuals. Some of their suggestions would bring online platform providers under greater scrutiny and directly target underlying systemically discriminatory social and marketing norms and practices that they understood to heavily influence girls’ ability to freely navigate their seamlessly integrated online/offline world.

*Surveillance is a problem, not a solution*

Many of our participants expressed as much or more concern about online surveillance by family members, employers and peers as surveillance by unknown adults. As Courtney (age 17) put it, “I was getting stalked by my family”. As discussed above, for many of our participants, peer surveillance and monitoring were integral components of “cyberbullying”.

Sometimes different forms of surveillance intersected. Amelia (age 18) blocked certain members of her church community from following her on Twitter and refrained from posting drinking photos on Facebook out of respect for her parents. She explained:

[M]y mom doesn’t want pictures of me drinking on Facebook just because I’m friends with people who are from- just like the church community and she said, “I just don’t want people seeing that and making judgements,” and I said, “Why are you so worried about what people will think when it’s not what they think of you it’s what they think of me?” But she explained it to me … you are my child, I’ve raised you a way and I don’t want people to make judgements about me from your actions.

Similarly, 20-year-old Kathleen’s parents worried about:

Just random strangers. Employers. Anything that could give a negative image or be misinterpreted in any way. Not that there’s really bad pictures of me, but just, like, a picture doesn’t explain the story, so it could be misinterpreted in many different ways.

As a result, Monica (age 16) identified a need for solutions that don’t involve “parents standing looking over your shoulder. You can’t really have that. … Like you don’t have any privacy”. Alessandra (age 21) also rejected surveillance-based policy interventions at a more general level:

I feel like [online child pornography is] exploited in the media to implement policies that permit spying which inflict on our rights you know as Canadians.

*Regulate platform providers to improve our privacy*

While recognizing that privacy settings were available and useful, some of our participants noted they could be unduly complicated and time consuming to use. As a result, as Nicole (age 16) put it:

[Y]ou have to like name off every single person that you want to see and some people just don’t have the time.

Others noted that even after going to the work of taking down material, the fact that it could be maintained in storage with service providers in perpetuity created a lasting sense of unease. Brianne (age 20) suggested:

That if you wanted something deleted, that it should be completely gone. Like, it should not be traceable ever again. Because there’s, like- people think that one picture’s funny of you; if you’re hanging out with friends and they take a picture that they think is funny and you think is horrible, you know…and even though it takes awhile, they might actually delete it, but it’s not actually gone. … It would be better if, like- I’d feel better if I knew that when I deleted an account or something everything’s gone, instead of them having my information.

Alessandra (age 20) went further to emphasize that users should have greater control over sales of their photos to third party users, an approach she felt could be particularly significant for young women, noting the sexual double standard applied to girls:

[if] they’re selling your information, like your pictures, that’s putting you at risk, *that* is a violation of privacy. … because if a girl’s father … [sees] their daughter on this advertisement on a porno site, I think it is more –you can have a lot more negative backlash than if … a father sees his son on the advertisement of a porno site, … just because of social constructions of male and female sexuality she’d be faced [with] harsher consequences socially.

Other participants expressed similar concerns, with Amelia (age 18) noting, “You should have the right to authorize whether or not they use your information … or your photos”.

*Require platform providers to make it easier to remove “cyberbullying”*

Some of our participants felt service providers should make it easier to stop “cyberbullying”. Jill (age 20) suggested clearer language on social networking sites about what “cyberbullying” is so that both “a direct, bad comment” and “several comments that are slightly negative” could be removed quickly. Kathleen (age 20) emphasized the importance of quick responses to “deal with the situation right away”. Josée urged greater security measures to protect against hackers, as well as increased staff at service providers to deal with these “kinds of problems because [in her view] there is a lot of cases”.

*Provide support for targets of “cyberbullying”*

Our participants emphasized the need for improved support for targets of “cyberbullying”. Keira (age 21) emphasized the carry over between online harassment and the school environment and suggested the appointment of:

[A] counsellor at school that is aware of what’s going on Facebook. I mean, like, you get home and your interaction with the people at school continues until 10 o’clock at night. You know? And so much is going on, not just happening in the hallways – it’s happening on the Internet. And I think that schools- I think that schools should be a lot more involved in that.

Mackenzie (age 20) also stressed that targets should know they have adults to talk to who will really listen to what they are saying.

Both Josée (age 15) and Alessandra (age 21) suggested that there was a real risk of declining online participation unless “cyberbullying” is addressed. Alessandra felt this was particularly true for members of marginalized communities, noting that Aboriginal persons who posted their support for social justice movements such as *Idle No More[[40]](#footnote-41)* were at “risk of racialized attacks” not faced by non-Aboriginals.

*Address problematic underlying social norms, not just the symptoms*

Alessandra adamantly advocated that effectively addressing the problem of online sexualized harassment and stigma for girls required proactive educational responses aimed at systemic prejudices:

 [I]f I was talking to a policy maker then I would say, “You want to eradicate the issue, or you wanna help limit the online bullying, and the sexual harassment of girls online, … and even just the idea of girls sending out these pictures of them with bikinis, or bras, or lingerie, and … that coming back to haunt them for the rest of their lives? You want to eradicate that, you have to implement women’s studies and both men and women need to take these courses…. That’s the kind of activities that are going to challenge … sexism and oppression of women.”

She contrasted these kinds of initiatives with more individually oriented responses typically aimed exclusively at girls, stressing it was important for high school curricula to incorporate teaching *all* youth:

[T]o start deconstructing and unlearning … the ideologies that if a woman gets raped then she should take self-defense or she shouldn’t have done this, or what she should’ve done differently as opposed to tackling the core issue: no, there’s a guy that’s a rapist. We gotta teach people not to rape, not how not to get raped.

Moreover, she concluded:

… [Girls need to learn by high school] we’re supposed to be allies … we’re not supposed to be fighting each other, we’re supposed to be working together. We’re supposed to keep an eye out on these issues for each other.

DISCUSSION

Our qualitative results – while not generalizable, nor representative of the full diversity of girls’ and young women’s experiences – nevertheless illustrate two issues highlighted in the literature on the importance of incorporating girls and young women as participants in policy processes that affect them. First, our results suggest that there may by gaps in knowledge between policymakers and our participants. Second, they suggest other kinds of policy approaches may be important to facilitating realization of girls’ and young women’s rights, including their right to full participation in the e-society that policymakers have identified as essential to Canada’s economic well-being.[[41]](#footnote-42)

***Gaps in knowledge***

Canadian federal policy debates related to children and technology tended to focus on sexualized dangers posed by unknown adults. In contrast, many of our participants were clear that being online wasn’t “all bad”. When they did discuss online fears and dangers, their concerns tended to relate more to harassment and surveillance by known others (apart from stranger-related concerns they sometimes expressed about their younger sisters and girl cousins). This kind of gap seems to reflect a well-documented trend of policymaker focus on sexual threats from unknown predators, despite clear evidence that girls and women are most a risk of violence by those known to them.[[42]](#footnote-43)

Notwithstanding Canadian policymakers’ tendency to speak about online risks in gender-neutral terms,[[43]](#footnote-44) our participants perceived differences based on gender, race and membership in the LGBTQ community. Most understood girls to be more exposed to online attacks than boys, in no small part because they felt girls were subject to greater negative scrutiny in relation to their appearance and sexuality than were boys. However, they also noted that gay and gender-non-conforming boys were also exposed, particularly for engaging in stereotypically “female behaviours” such as posting selfies. While most of our participants were reluctant to say that “sexism” informed online attacks, their descriptions of their everyday experiences with the different standards applied to boys and girls readily parallels the double standard applied to girls’ expressions of sexuality identified in the literature.[[44]](#footnote-45) They also suggest the influence of social norms around gender conformity that construct and constrain performances of “proper” masculinity and femininity,[[45]](#footnote-46) often in ways that render “acting like a girl” a debilitating insult to boys.

When Canadian policy debate relating to technology and children broke from gender neutrality it was typically to discuss specific examples of girls who had committed suicide in connection with “cyberbullying” or to discuss girls generically. Generic discussions tended toward caricatures, such as the sexual temptress or the naïve know-it-all,[[46]](#footnote-47) focusing on behaviours by imaginary girls isolated from the social context and constructions that give them meaning.[[47]](#footnote-48)

Our participants also sometimes discussed individual girls who had committed suicide, particularly Amanda Todd. However, their concerns did not end with addressing the individual perpetrators involved or the individual girls themselves. Instead, they emphasized what they saw as the unfair consequences of sexualized exposure for girls, as opposed to boys, essentially highlighting a systemic sexual double standard usually without explicitly using the language of sexism or inequality. Some of our participants also relied on caricatures of *other* girls, often in ways that seemed to allow them to distance themselves from sexualized self-representations[[48]](#footnote-49) and shots that might be thought of as too attention-seeking. In contrast with the policy debates, however, our participants simultaneously provided empathetic, contextualized understandings of sexualized self-representations as part of negotiating a complex environment influenced by desires, norms, markets and technological architectures, which our participants, again, understood to produce quite different consequences for girls than for boys.

Our participants described living a seamlessly integrated offline/online existence,[[49]](#footnote-50) which unsurprisingly incorporated all aspects of life, including expression of and experimentation with sexuality, self-image and desire. Many said that online visibility was integral to social success. They also identified the ways in which social norms around visibility interacted with other kinds of norms, including market pressures to emulate mediatized heteronormative stereotypes of beauty and sexuality as a recognizable way of achieving visibility.[[50]](#footnote-51) Unrealistic mediatized norms acted both as an enabler of recognition, and a constraint on diverse expressions of sexuality and desire.[[51]](#footnote-52) In addition, our participants understood themselves, as girls, to be scrutinized particularly intensely online (as compared to boys), leading to an exaggerated risk of lasting reputational effects for crossing over the fine line between expressions of socially-acceptable sexualized beauty and being a “slut”.[[52]](#footnote-53)

Our participants also described a world in which online architectures made experimentation with different kinds of self-representations particularly risky for girls. The perceived gendered risk of losing control over one’s online image appeared to make privacy exceptionally important to them (at least until sexual double standards are systematically dismantled). However, they noted that online spaces were often architected to undermine both their privacy and their privacy strategies. Many noted the ways in which online social media sites were structured to incent and reward disclosure (e.g. through friend counts), and to make it difficult to exercise privacy strategies that allow for particular performances to be accessible only to particular audiences. Many were unclear as to what service providers were able to do with information posted by and about them.[[53]](#footnote-54) Moreover, some expressed discomfort with the permanence of the record, noting that even when they deleted their accounts or photos, they still resided on a hard drive controlled by the service provider. Our participants went further to say that online social media sites could be set up in ways that invited “cyberbullying” by, for example, specifically facilitating attention seeking through inviting questions to be asked anonymously. In terms of redress, they noted that service provider policies on when information would be taken down were often less than clear.

***Unexplored approaches***

As Jiwani noted in her research on violence prevention and girls, the process of identifying knowledge gaps between policymakers and girls and young women can bring into relief other kinds of approaches that may better facilitate realization of girls’ and young women’s rights.[[54]](#footnote-55) Our participants highlighted possibilities for two different sorts of responses: (i) policy targeted at a variety of other actors beyond girls themselves and unknown sexual predators; and (ii) programs aimed at underlying systems of discrimination that inform the everyday kinds of problems they understood to be most salient to girls and young women. I discuss some concrete examples of policies that could respond to the issues raised in the conclusion below.

CONCLUSION

The composite of online life that our participants drew for us revealed a complicated interaction between personal choices and desire, social norms, gendered marketing practices and online architectures that shape girls’ online lives,[[55]](#footnote-56) which invites analysis of how and whether law should and will intervene. To date, legal interventions have tended toward reactive, criminal law responses that mask and offer limited redress for the underlying systemic issues and the corporate practices that inform them. Our participants described a world in which architectures structured to maximize disclosure (and minimize privacy) code high counts of “friends” and “likes” as “popularity”. These architectural constraints combine with social norms and marketing practices that encourage emulation of mediatized representations of female beauty and sexuality as ways of competing for recognition (often, for heterosexual girls, from males). Together these produce a perfect storm incenting self-disclosure that simultaneously promises both celebrity and recognition, but also a gendered risk of shame and harassment that is complicated by the enduring consequences of unnecessarily permanent digital records.

These interactions invite policy responses that take into account the difficulty of navigating this complex environment, without compromising girls’ capacity to thrive in their fully integrated online/offline existences. Moreover, they invite consideration of proactive policy alternatives aimed not primarily at further responsibilizing girls themselves by counseling them to further limit their online participation. [[56]](#footnote-57) Alternative responses aimed at promotion of a more egalitarian society[[57]](#footnote-58) could involve: (i) curricular reform in our education system to enhance the critical media and digital literacy skills of *all* youth, as well as their understanding of human rights, in order to assist them to unpack and challenge discriminatory social norms and widely marketed white, heteronormative stereotypes of femininity and sexuality that, among other things, set girls up for gendered shaming, and for competition for male attention; [[58]](#footnote-59) (ii) enhanced corporate accountability for unrealistically narrow media representations of girls and women that work to constrain and other non-mainstream representations and diverse realities;[[59]](#footnote-60) and (iii) intervening on corporate practices that structure online environments in ways that make it difficult for girls to exercise privacy strategies and set them up to surveil one another.

Policymakers are internationally obligated to facilitate the voice of girl children and to protect their best interests. Our results illustrate how policymakers’ understanding of the “dangers” to girls and young women online can vary in important ways from those of girls and young women themselves. Meaningfully facilitating girls and young women’s voices will require specific initiatives to engage girls and young women from a rich diversity of backgrounds and experiences in the project of understanding and improving the conditions of our e-society. It is also likely to mean public intervention on the habits and practices of other actors who profit from the perfect storm that currently mediates girls’ and young women’s e-quality.

1. \* Associate Professor, University of Ottawa Faculty of Law (Common Law). Thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for their generous support of The eGirls Project. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Yasmin Jiwani, *Violence Prevention and the Girl Child,* (Vancouver: The Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence, FREDA Centre, 1999), 5, last modified February, 1999, http://fredacentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Jiwani-et-al-1999-Violence-Prevention-and-the-Girl-Child-.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Trina Grillo and Stephanie M. Wildman, “Obscuring the Importance of Race: The Implication of Making Comparisons between Racism and Sexism (Or Other-Isms),” *Duke Law Journal* 1991(1991): 402. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Kimberley Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43:6 (1991): 1279. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. For example, in the 2011 federal election, elected MPs were 74% male, 90% were not members of a visible minority group (over 60% of elected women were not members of minority groups), 74% had completed some post-secondary education, and their average age was 49.79 years, notwithstanding that women comprised the majority of the Canadian population, and ethnic minorities comprised almost 20% of the population. See: Mary-Rose Brown, *Edging Towards Diversity: A Statistical Breakdown of Canada’s 41st Parliament, with Comparisons to the 40th Parliament*, (Ottawa: Public Policy Forum, June 2011), 10, accessed September 25, 2014, http://www.ppforum.ca/sites/default/files/edging\_towards\_diversity\_final.pdf; Jerome H. Black, “Racial Diversity in the 2011 Federal Election: Visible Minority Candidates and MPs,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 36:3 (2013): 22; “Women in Federal Politics,” Equal Voice, 1, last modified March, 2013, http://www.equalvoice.ca/pdf/women\_in\_federal\_politics\_fact\_sheet\_march\_2013.pdf; and Jerome H. Black, “Minority Women in the 35th Parliament: A New Dimension of Social Diversity,” *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 20:1 (1997): 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Gerison Lansdown, Shane Jimerson, and Reza Shahroozi, “Children’s Rights and School Psychology: Children’s Right to Participation,” *Journal of School Psychology* 52:3 (2014): 4-7; Terry Barber, “Young People and Civic Participation: A Conceptual Overview,” *Youth & Policy* 96 (2007): 32; Barry Percy-Smith, “’You Think You Know? …You have no Idea’: Youth Participation in Health Policy Development,” *Health Education Research* 22:6 (2007): 880. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Defined for purposes of this discussion as persons under 18 years of age. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child*, Convention on the Rights of the Child*, GA Res 40/25, UN GAOR, 44th Sess., U.N. Doc A/RES/44/25 (New York: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1990), Article 3, accessed September 23, 2014, http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx; Natasha Blanchet-Cohen and Christophe Bedeaux, “Towards a Rights-Based Approach to Youth Programs: Duty-Bearers’ Perspectives”, *Children and Youth Services Review* 38 (2014): 76, subsequently called “Duty-Bearers’ Perspectives”; United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *The Right of the Child to be Heard*, CRC, 55 Sess., General Comment No 12 UN Doc CRC/C/GC/12 (New York: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2009), para 72-73, accessed September 23, 2014, [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/advanceversions/crc-c-gc-12.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Susan Bennett, Stuart Hart, and Kimberly Ann Svevo-Cianci, “The Need for a General Comment for Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Toward Enlightenment and Progress for Child Protection,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 33:11 (2009): 786. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Blanchet-Cohen and Bedeaux, “Duty-Bearers’ Perspectives,” *supra* note 7 at 76; Roger Hart and Michael Schwab, “Children’s Rights and the Building of Democracy: A Dialogue on the International Movement for Children’s Participation,” *Children and the Environment* 24:3 (1997): 179; Percy-Smith, “You Think You Know?,” *supra* note 5 at 889. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Lansdown, Jimerson, and Shahroozi*,* “Children’s Rights and School Psychology,” *supra* note 5 at 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Roger Hart, Collette Daiute, Semil Iltus, David Kritt, Michaela Rome, and Kim Sabo, “Developmental Theory and Children’s Participation in Community Organizations,” *Children and the Environment* 24:3 (1997): 33; Percy-Smith, “You Think You Know?,” *supra* note 5 at 889; Ariadne Vroman and Philippa Collin, “Everyday Youth Participation? Contrasting Views from Australian Policymakers and Young People,” *Young: Nordic Journal of Youth Research* 18:1 (2010): 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
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14. Barry Percy-Smith and Danny Burns, “Exploring the Role of Children and Young People as Agents of Change in Sustainable Community Development,” *Local Environment* 18:3 (2013):324. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Lansdown, Jimerson and Shahroozi, “Children’s Rights and School Psychology,” *supra* note 5 at 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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18. Jiwani, Berman and Cameron, “Violence Prevention,” *supra* note 16 at 135; Jennifer Tipper, *The Canadian Girl-Child: Determinants of the Health and Well-being of Girls and Young Women,* (Ottawa: Canadian Institute of Child Health, 1997), 6, accessed September 23, 2014, http://www.cich.ca/PDFFiles/cndgirlchildeng.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
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22. United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, *Agreed Conclusions*, *supra* note 20 at Art. 21; Jiwani, *supra* note 16 at 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
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29. Bailey and Steeves, “Will the Real Digital Girl Please Stand Up?,” *supra* note 26 at 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. These were also the sorts of issues focused upon by media in this general timeframe: Steven Roberts and Aziz Douai, “Moral Panics and Cybercrime: How Canadian Media Cover Internet Child Luring,” *Journal of Canadian Media Studies* 10:1 (2012): 12-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
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34. Lara Karaian, “Policing ‘Sexting’: Responsibilization, Respectability and Sexual Subjectivity in Child Protection/Crime Prevention Responses to Teenagers’ Digital Sexual Expression,” *Theoretical Criminology* 18:3 (2013): 2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. For a rural/urban comparative analysis, see Burkel and Saginur’s chapter 5, *infra*. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Our rural adult focus group included Catlin (19), Laura (18), Trish (18) and Brianne (20). Our rural minor focus group included Courtney (17), Chelsea (17), Paula (17), Beth (16), and Josie (16). Our urban adult focus group included Keira (21), Donna (19), Jill (20), Andrea (22), Ashley (18) and Kathleen (20). Our urban minor focus group included Vicky (17), Eve (16), Abby (17), Jacquelyn (17), Lauryn (17), Monique (16) and Jane (16). Our rural adult interviewees were Cassandra (19), Becky (19), and Amelia (18). Our rural minor interviewees were Monica (16), Lynda (17) and Nicole (16). Our urban adult interviewees were Alessandra (21), Mackenzie (20) and Cindy (20). Our urban minor interviewees were Alicia (17), Clare (16) and Josée (15). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. For further details, see Steeves’ chapter 6, *infra*. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Andree Lau, “Amanda Todd: Bullied Teen Commits Suicide,” *The Huffington Post*, 11 October 2012, accessed September 24, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/10/11/amanda-todd-teen-bullying-suicide-youtube\_n\_1959668.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. “*Ask and Answer”*, Ask.fm, accessed September 24, 2014, http://www.ask.fm. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. For further information on this important social justice movement see: “CStreet Campaign,” *Idle No More* , accessed September 24, 2014, http://www.idlenomore.ca. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. “Minister Clement Updates Canadians on Canada's Digital Economy Strategy,” *Government of Canada: Industry Canada News Releases*, last modified November 22, 2010, http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/064.nsf/eng/06096.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Jiwani, *Violence Prevention and the Girl Child*, *supra* note 1 at 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Mirroring the tendency documented by FREDA in connection with violence prevention and the girl child. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Jessica Ringrose, Laura Harvey, Rosalind Gill and Sonia Livingstone, “Teen Girls, Sexual Double Standards and ‘Sexting’: Gendered Value in Digital Image Exchange,” *Feminist Theory* 14:3 (2013): 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Elizabeth J. Meyer, *Gender, Bullying and Harassment: Strategies to End Sexism and Homophobia in Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), 6-9, 21-22, accessed September 25, 2014, https://tesl-ej.org/~teslejor/pdf/ej61/r1.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Bailey and Steeves, “Will the Real Digital Girl Please Stand Up?,” *supra* note 26 at 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. In much the same way as FREDA documented a media tendency to isolate delinquent girls and girl on girl violence from the social context of physical and sexual abuse that often informs it. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Caroline Caron, “Sexy Girls as the “Other”: The Discursive Processes of Stigmatizing Girls.” (paper presented at the Canadian Communication Association Conference, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC., June 4-6, 2008, 6, accessed September 25, 2014, http://archivesic.ccsd.cnrs.fr/docs/00/35/28/31/PDF/Girls\_as\_the\_Other.doc.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Valerie Steeves*, Young Canadians in a Wired World: Phase II: Trends and Recommendations* (Ottawa: Media Awareness Network, 2005), 21, accessed September 25, 2014, http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/publication-report/full/YCWWII-trends-recomm.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Valerie Steeves and Jane Bailey, “Living in the Mirror: Understanding Young Women’s Experiences with Online Social Networking,” in *Expanding the Gaze: Gender, Public Space and Surveillance*, eds. Amanda Glasbeek, Rob Haynen and Emily Van der Muelen [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming 2015]. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Ringrose et al., “Teen Girls,” *supra* note 43 at 312. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Ringrose et al., “Teen Girls*,”* supranote 43at 317; Jane Bailey, Valerie Steeves, Jacquelyn Burkell and Priscilla Regan, “Negotiating with Gender Stereotypes on Social Networking Sites: From “Bicycle Face” to Facebook,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 37 (2013): 11.. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. It has been clear for some time that privacy policies are not always written in understandable ways, especially in terms of facilitating youth understanding: Anca Micheti, Jacquelyn Burkell and Valerie Steeves, “Fixing Broken Doors: Strategies for Drafting Privacy Policies Young People Can Understand,” *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 30:2 (2010): 130; Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, *Privacy for Everyone: Report on the* Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, (Ottawa: Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, 2011), 21, accessed September 25, 2014, https://www.priv.gc.ca/information/ar/201112/2011\_pipeda\_e.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Jiwani, Berman, and Cameron, “Violence Prevention and the Canadian Girl Child,”, *supra* note 16 at 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Lawrence Lessig, *Code Version 2.0* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. For further discussion of responsibilization, see Karaian, *supra* note 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Elizabeth Meyer, “New Solutions for Bullying and Harassment: A Post-Structural, Feminist Approach,” in *School Bullying: New Theories in Context*, eds. Robin May Schott and Dorte Marie Sondergaard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. See Steeves’ chapter 6, *infra*; “Resisting Stereotypes and Working for Change,” MediaSmarts, accessed September 25, 2014, http://mediasmarts.ca/gender-representation/women-and-girls/resisting-stereotypes-and-working-change. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Eileen L Zurbriggen, Rebecca L Collins, Sharon Lamb, Tomi-Ann Roberts, Deborah L Tolman, L Monique Ward & Jeanne Blake, *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association), 38, accessed September 25, 2014, http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)